



US Army Corps
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Northwestern Division

Columbia River Update

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The Columbia River is the dominant water system in the Pacific Northwest. The Corps of Engineers and other federal agencies are charged with managing the Columbia-Snake river system to best serve the needs of the region and fulfill the requirements of law. This periodic report will focus on how the current hydrologic situation and energy emergencies affect reservoir operations in the Columbia Basin and the resultant impacts on listed species and other project purposes.

Snowpack continues to drop

With more than one-half the Columbia Basin at or below 50% of average snowpack and most subbasins dropping, this year's dire snowpack season is close to the record lows of 1977.

According to the National Climate and Weather Center in Portland, the biggest drop in basin snowpack - nearly 22% - occurred in the Snake headwaters with other subbasins losing between 4 to 10 % since last month.

The Columbia at Grand Coulee sets a new record low of 51% of average snowpack for February (as it did in January). The worst snowpack in the Columbia Basin is the Kootenai, with just 45% of average snowpack recorded.

Streamflows reflect scarcity

February's seasonal streamflow volume forecasts show a significant reduction from January's, reflecting the scarcity of snowpack.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service forecasts spring and summer streamflows of well below average (less than 70%) in many areas of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana and Wyoming.

January precipitation suffers

Only 1.56 inches of precipitation fell in the NW in January, the 5th driest on record since 1895. In comparison, for 1995-2000, the region's January precipitation averaged 4.78 inches.

For the week ending Feb. 11, Federal generation was 1.175 million MW-Hrs per week, with 6991 average MW. Corps generation was an average of 4952 MW, or about 41% of available capacity.

CURRENT SITUATION

Pool Elevations (Approx. in feet)

	3/31 Flood Control	Today
Libby (CoE)	2441	2399
Dworshak (CoE)	1579	1507
Grand Coulee (BoR)	1283	1236
Hungry Horse (BoR)	3555	3506

Reservoir Operations

Another power emergency was declared Monday by Bonneville Power Administration. The Technical Management Team agreed to implement the following operations until further notice:

- Outflows from Dworshak were increased to 6 kcfs on Feb. 13, up from last week's average of 1.3 kcfs.
- Libby outflows remain at 15 kcfs since Feb. 8, for an average of 12.7 kcfs last week.
- Hungry Horse outflows were increased to 5 kcfs, from last week's average of 3.87 kcfs.
- Grand Coulee outflows are at 106 kcfs, up from last week's average of 94.4 kcfs.
- Outflows at Bonneville Dam may exceed the 130 kcfs base power operation and the 11.7 foot base chum operation.

The probability of refill at Corps reservoirs by June 30 is less than 50%.

The Technical Management Team

Created in 1995 as a forum for in-season management of the Columbia River, the Technical Management Team makes real-time decisions during the fisheries management season, based on current biological and hydrologic information. Representatives from federal and state agencies and the four NW states, along with tribal participants, create a yearly water management plan to provide optimum fish passage conditions in the Federal Columbia River Power System. The TMT meets frequently to discuss Columbia River system operational decisions. Minutes of the meetings are posted on the website: <http://www.nwd-wc.usace.army.mil>.